(b) if so, whether any enquiry has been ordered to trace the missing foodgrains;

(c) whether it is also true that several transport contractors engaged by FCI have siphoned off 6,348 tonnes of rice worth Rs. 50 crore in connivance with the officials of FCI;

(d) if so, the reaction of the Government thereto; and

(e) whether any action has been taken against the said transport contractors and the officials of FCI involved in the theft of rice?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF FOOD AND CONSUMER AFFAIRS (SHRI RAGHUBANS' PRASAD SINGH): (a) No, Sir.

(b) Due to certain discrepancies in the stock position maintained by the Government vis-a-vis the Food Corporation of India, Government is conducting an exercise to reconcile the stock figures. A special audit has also been ordered by the Comptroller and Auditor General of India.

(c) to (e) Two contractors namely M/s Gautam Associates, Mohali; and M/s Yazen Ayjer & Co., Pehowa, who were appointed as transport contractors for transportation of foodgrains from Haryana to Imphal (Manipur), had not delivered 4368 MT and 1543 MT of foodgrains valuing about Rs. 4.25 crores. On the basis of preliminary investigations, 6 Assistant Managers and one District Manager of Food Corporation of India have been placed under suspension. FIR has also been lodged against the defaulting contractors for misappropriation of foodgrains. The Government has also approved the proposal of the Food Corporation of India to refer the case to the Central Bureau of Investigation for detailed investigations, and FCI has taken action accordingly.

Value of Heavy Earth Moving Machinery Spares in CIL

*77. SHRI GYAN RANJAN: Will the Minister of COAL be pleased to state:

(a) the total value of heavy earth moving machinery spares held company-wise by Coal India Ltd. as on 1st January, 1997;

(b) what has been the value of average monthly consumption of heavy earth moving machinery spare parts;

(c) whether Government are satisfied with the spare parts inventory management in Coal India Ltd. and its subsidiaries; and

(d) if not, what action Government propose to take for streamlining the inventory management?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COAL (SHRIMATI KANTI SINGH): (a) The total value of Heavy Earth Moving Machinery, spares held company-wise by Coal India Limited as on 1st January, 1997;

The value of Heavy Earth Moving Machinery (HEMM) spare parts held by Coal India Ltd. (CIL) as on 1.1.97 cannot be given since audit report for the year 1996-97 is not yet finalised. However, company-wise total values of HEMM spares as on 31.3.96 as per audited figures are as under:

COMPANY	INVENTORY (Rs. in Crs.)
ECL	43.48
BCCL	47.67
CCL	56.09
WCL	41.40
SECL	88.39
MCL	22.73
NCL	210.40
NEC	1.61
CIL TOTAL	511.77

(b) What has been the value of average monthly consumption of heavy earth moving machinery spare parts;

Company-wise average monthly consumption of HEMM spares are as follows:—

COMPANY	AVERAGE MONTHLY CONSUMPTION (Rs. in Crores)
ECL	3.80
BCCL	4.96
CCL	6.17
WCL	5.29
SECL	8.25
MCL	3.81
NCL	11.93
NEC	0.04
CIL TOTAL	44.25

(c) whether Government are satisfied with the spare parts inventory management in Coal India Limited and its subsidiaries;

Having regard to the principles of inventory management, CIL has prescribed a norm that the inventory should not exceed the value of 10 months consumption.As on 31.3.96 the inventory stood at the level of 11.56 months consumption. This-is not satisfactory, however, what is encouraging is that, as compared to a stock holding of 14.39 months consumption in 1992-93, it has steadily come down and in 1995-96 it stood at 11.56 months consumption only, this is encouraging.

(d) if not, what action government propose to take for streamlining the inventory management?

The Coal companies have introduced systems for better management of inventory in coordination with spare parts manufactures in order to ensure timely delivery of spares such that extra stocks need not be maintained by them. Further, a computerised system of inventory management is being introduced and codification work has already begun with nine lakh spare parts already codified. In due course, all the spare parts will be codified and brought on to an online computerised integrated material management system for better and effective management of inventory.

Task Force to Identify Areas of Medical Biotechnology

*78. SHRIMATI BASANTI SARMA:
DR. SHRIKANT RAMCHANDRA JICHKAR:

Will the Minister of SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY be pleased to s,tate:

(a) the work accomplished by the Task force appointed by the Department of Biotechnology to identify areas of medical biotechnology;

(b) the names of projects which are under way now;

(c) what are its tentative results; and

(d) what are the future prospects of medical biotechnology?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY AND MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF POWER (SHRI YOGINDER K. ALAGH): (a) and (b) Expert Task Forces advise the Department of Biotechnology in all important areas of biotechnology. The Medical Biotechnology Task Force has helped the department in identification, recommendation and monitoring of about 124 R & D projects in frontier and relevant areas. The broad emphasis of the Task Force has been on: (1) developing diagnostics for early diagnosis, prophylaxis and therapeutics in relation to communicable and non-communicable diseases, (2) devising alternate drug delivery systems using liposomes and' microspheres. (3) production of important biologicals and bioactive I molecules using suitable expression